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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 001277

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CAIRO FOR DOETSCH  
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TAGS: PREF PGOV PHUM SY IZ JO

SUBJECT: A/S SAUERBREY DISCUSSES IRAQIS WITH GOJ

REF: AMMAN 1067 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

**¶1.** (C) SUMMARY: Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) Ellen Sauerbrey and Ambassador met March 14 with Bassem Awadallah, Director of King Abdullah's Office, and the head of the General Intelligence Directorate (GID) Muhammad Al Dahabi together to discuss the issue of Iraqis in Jordan. NEA/ELA Director Abercrombie-Winstanley, PRM/ANE Deputy Director Bartlett and aides to Dahabi also attended. GOJ officials made it clear during this meeting that the Jordanian Government would continue to host Iraqis in Jordan, but would not recognize them as refugees unless individual status determinations were conducted. While Jordan would continue to regard the vast majority of Iraqis as visitors, the GOJ would allow them access to public education and health services. Jordanian officials expressed a willingness -- and acknowledged the need -- to accept international funding to offset the rising costs of providing public services, but emphasized that it should be offered bilaterally so that parallel systems are not established that could lead to friction among various communities )- Jordanian, Palestinian and Iraqi )- living here. END SUMMARY.

UNHCR'S ROLE

**¶2.** (C) Awadallah stated that UNHCR had "trespassed" from its current MOU with the GOJ, and that it may be best to renegotiate this agreement. He stated further that Jordan wants a new MOU to govern registration mechanisms for Iraqis that takes into account GOJ security concerns. The GOJ would not agree to UNHCR according refugee status to Iraqis on a *prima facie* basis, but would allow some form of registration. A/S Sauerbrey noted that we understood that UNHCR would resume registering Iraqis on March 18 under the terms of the previous MOU until a new MOU is negotiated. The Jordanians accepted this information without comment. NOTE: Registration under the terms of the old MOU has in fact resumed as of March 19. END NOTE.

**¶3.** (C) Awadallah noted that USG intervention in the GOJ's MOU negotiations with UNHCR was unwelcome, but indicated the Ambassador would be kept informed informally. A/S Sauerbrey responded by saying we would respect the bilateral nature of the GOJ-UNHCR negotiations while emphasizing that we view UNHCR as a critical actor. COMMENT: It will be important for both parties to execute a new MOU as quickly as possible in

order to ensure an effective protection regime and restore UNHCR's ability to work with the government. END COMMENT.

JORDANIANS OPEN TO ASSISTANCE

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¶4. (C) GID officials told A/S Sauerbrey that all Iraqi children, regardless of status or registration, can attend Jordanian public schools and access health care. They noted that an annual fee of 40 Jordanian Dinars (about US \$56) for primary education and 60 Jordanian Dinars (about US \$85) for secondary education would be required. When A/S Sauerbrey inquired as to the number of Iraqi children in public schools, the officials said they had yet to determine the number. COMMENT: At subsequent meetings on the assistance issue (reported septel), UNICEF officials and Jordanian and international NGO representatives disputed that Iraqis have unfettered access to public schools, citing recent information from the Ministry of Education that directly contradicts the assertion that public schools are open to all but a few Iraqis. END COMMENT.

¶5. (C) Jordanian officials meeting with Sauerbrey were adamant, however, that Jordanian government ministries already provide assistance to Iraqis directly, and as a part of assistance to the Jordanian residents generally. They also stated that financial assistance should be provided on a bilateral basis through the GOJ. Citing UNRWA as an example, the officials stated they did not want parallel institutions established that might lead Iraqis to become permanent refugees in Jordan like the Palestinians, or would cause friction among the various communities living in Jordan.

¶6. (C) Jordanian officials were candid about their need to

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accept international assistance to help address the growing strain on their social service sector, noting rising costs for water and electricity and competition in the labor market. The GOJ preference is that this assistance not be tied to refugees, and that it serve Jordanians and Iraqis alike. GOJ officials welcomed A/S Sauerbrey's suggestion of using UNICEF or other UN agencies to provide general financial support to the Ministry of Education in order to avoid new aid being refugee-specific.

¶7. (C) When asked about the pending survey of Iraqis in Jordan, to be conducted by the Norwegian NGO FAFO, the officials replied that the terms of reference for the survey were still being finalized. Ambassador Hale asked if the GOJ regarded the survey as an urgent matter, to which the Jordanians replied "yes." Separately, GOJ officials told Sauerbrey that Jordan would attend the April UNHCR conference on Iraqi refugees, likely at the level of the MFA's Secretary General.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: This meeting was a marked improvement in tone to a similar one held March 8 in Washington with the two main Jordanian interlocutors and the American side. These key Jordanian officials have now indicated the government's willingness to work with UNHCR, acceptance of Iraqis into public schools and clinics, and interest in receiving international assistance. Embassy Amman will continue to follow progress on GOJ-UNHCR talks on a new MOU, on Iraqis, access to public services, and broader protection and assistance issues. END COMMENT.

¶9. (U) This message was cleared by Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey.

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